

COUNCIL OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

Topic: Refuse/Waste Management

July 27th, 2022

President Jerry Mazur called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Pastor Stoller gave an invocation.

Mazur outlined the purpose of the meeting, which was to discuss the topic of refuse/waste management in the city, as well as the rules for recognition and discussion for the evening.

Marshall was given the floor to open the discussion. He stated that Council was here for discussion only, and not to make any decisions or take any actions. He provided his history on Council, and the trash issues that have come up during his tenure. He noted that, over this time, many issues were able to be worked out with the local haulers. He acknowledged that the idea of a single hauler in the city had been brought up before, but no formal discussion had been held during his time on Council. He described the process he would like to see for the meeting, inviting comments, questions, likes, and dislikes from Council, after review of the contracts they have from other similar cities with a single hauler. He also outlined that Council's job is to do what is best for the city and their constituents. He asked Davis (4th Ward) to speak first, and for each Council member to share their ideas from that point on.

Davis (4th Ward) read an "opening statement" he prepared. He acknowledged his personal opinion on the issue, but also stated he would represent the will of his constituents. He shared his personal story on issues with trash service shortly after he moved to Van Wert, explaining this was the first city he had lived in where there wasn't a single hauler. In his opinion, charging citizens for large item disposal is an "antiquated system" that has been replaced by improved systems in other communities. He ultimately stated he welcomed ideas on how to make the situation better, and modernize the process for the betterment of the citizens.

Next, Moore gave her thoughts, sharing that she had spoken to many people that wondered why this was becoming an issue at this time. She acknowledged that she was in favor of helping people remove large items, but she isn't convinced that moving to a single hauler, and possibly putting the local haulers out of business, is a solution. She stated that as a small business owner herself, she doesn't want to cause people to lose jobs, and lose the other aspects of the community that are supported by these local businesses. She ended that, while she is open-minded, those are her concerns.

Stinnett stated that he read and weighed the documents that were provided, and his goal was to look for ways to help the elderly and the disabled in the community. In his opinion, Stinnett suggested that moving to a single hauler did not benefit the city of Van Wert, but what did benefit Van Wert was protecting the local haulers. He noted that local haulers support local youth programs, they buy their fuel locally, and they support jobs for local residents. He stated that he didn't believe any single hauler was going to sign a contract, come into Van Wert, and still provide that local support.

Agler then gave his statement, first reading from a letter that Young's Trash Service asked him to read, which included a long list of local programs and organizations that Young's sponsors and supports. Agler also read a letter from Eric McCracken, owner of Lee Kinstle, which supported Young's Waste Service, and the local trash haulers. Agler then stated that Young's is in his ward, and his stance is to protect the businesses in his ward. He reiterated that a single hauler from out of town will fail to support local businesses and local jobs, and he staunchly opposes a single hauler system.

Bowers explained that she had done research by contacting the nearby comparison cities that were in the information packet that Council was reviewing, and asked for the pros and cons of moving to a single hauler. She stated that the contacts she spoke with had relayed that the major problems they had before moving to a single hauler system were still present - missed pickups or residents not putting out their trash for collection. She also noted that she heard that the city office would get more complaints after the move to a single hauler, as residents didn't know how to get in touch with the hauler.

Kallas opened by stating that he was very open-minded, and sat in the middle on the issue. He stated that he believed there were many positives to moving to a single hauler, but also many negatives. If he would vote today, he didn't know where he'd ultimately vote. He explained that his goal is to do what is best for Van Wert and listen to the public, while also understanding that you can't make everyone happy. He stated that in reviewing the information and doing his own research, a few positives that stand out are the possibility of cheaper rates, as well as a regularly scheduled big item/bulk pickup. In light of enforcement of trash/junk ordinances, he's heard several complaints about people that are unable to get rid of their junk or old furniture, etc., and a single hauler might help with that. However, he also stated that he is in firm agreement with Moore, Stinnett, Agler, in that this type of move would hurt local small businesses. Kallas also read a letter from Bob Priest, which concluded with the opinion that moving to a single hauler would have negative outcomes for Van Wert, and a call for Council and the local haulers to come together to create a solution on their own.

Marshall commented that he couldn't disagree with any of his fellow Council members, before discussing some of the items he was looking for in his review and research of the information packets/contracts - namely, the amenities aside from regular pickup. In his mind, large item/bulk pickup was a big issue for him, and improving that process for residents is one of his goals. He noted that the citywide trash efforts in the past haven't been overly successful, in his opinion, but could be improved with the combined efforts of the city and all of the local haulers. Marshall declared that there are many advantages of a single hauler, but as of now, he wouldn't be ready to make any decision on the issue. He ultimately wants to do right by constituents.

Mazur asked Marshall for specifics in the contracts to back up his statements. Marshall had difficulty finding his notes, and Kallas offered up his thoughts. Kallas ran through the specific costs and pickup options for five of the cities in particular. Marshall followed up by stating that in many of those bids, the hauler would state their costs for several years in advance - typically five to seven years out, with generally a 2%-3% increase each year. It was also noted that pickup for city government was in the contract at no additional cost, and several bonds were involved in the contracts as well.

Davis (4th Ward) explained that the bid process is an "a la carte" process, where a city can pick and choose elements they want to see in the contract, and then haulers would bid on that package. He noted that some options could be leaf/brush pickup, large item pickup, a "spring cleaning" where residents can take items to dumpsters. In his mind, Davis (4th Ward) stated he wanted to provide the same services to Van Wert that citizens of other cities have through a single hauler.

Agler stated that in a bidding process, if something seems too good to be true, then it usually is. He used the water tower as an example, citing a bid that one contractor couldn't complete, and another had to be brought in. He also offered that large item pickup is already available in Van Wert, explaining that if residents call a hauler, then it can be picked up. Agler again stated that he was staunchly against a single hauler system, but was in favor of the city's current haulers coming together for a meeting to discuss any issues. He also relayed that he was in favor of competition among the haulers, as a lack of competition will drive prices higher and run out the "little guy" local haulers.

Mazur clarified with Markward and Fleming that verbiage could be in the bid packet stating that all offers could be rejected. Fleming said that it was possible, but a strong reason would be needed to reject a bid - otherwise, the situation could end up in court.

Moore acknowledged that she could pay less based on the contractual costs, but noted that other residents may end up paying more. She stated that she's heard good things about what the local haulers are doing, and would like to keep the city's haulers local. She also commented that she would be in favor of the more frequent large item pickups or citywide cleanups. She also questioned whether prices could rise after a contract was reached.

Davis (4th Ward) asked Fleming if the city would benefit from an outside source handling the brush pickup. Fleming stated it would free up time, but they have really simplified and improved that process already. Davis (4th Ward) also asked about the back and forth in the bidding process, but Fleming stated the city's wants would have to be clearly outlined initially, with alternate language included, instead of a negotiation process. Fleming stated the best package, including alternates, can be accepted, but it's best to be clear upfront. Mazur also clarified that alternates may not be placed in, but contractors can also offer up alternates of their own as well.

Stinnett stated that one of the positives of the contracts was the ability for residents to get rid of large items they can't take care of themselves. But again, he restated that it's a solution that the community should work to fix together instead of a single hauler. Stinnett suggested all the city's haulers come together in a meeting with the city, and discuss how to schedule consistent large item hauling days over the year. He believed that would solve the problem at hand.

Fleming stated his family has used Young's for 25 years, and noted they have never failed to pick up a large item. He said it only takes a phone call, and someone will come to pick it up. Mazur asked what the city paid last year for the citywide cleanup. Markward stated it was a cost of \$4500, but Danfoss contributed half of that cost. Markward also asked Council to continue to consider that while contracts, such as the examples Council was looking at, would save some people money, it would also force many residents to pay more.

Mazur opened the floor to the public. Ray Haas, 915 Park St., stated that he moved to Van Wert in 1994, and he's remodeled his home one room at a time over 28 years. He commented that everything he's put out over the years has been picked up, and he's never had an extra charge on his bill. He also remarked that his father owned a waste management business, and the city brought in a single hauler there. His father had the issue placed on the ballot, and it was voted down 2-1. Mr. Haas stated this should go to the voters if passed. Later, Mr. Haas also recommended that Council consider fuel surcharges in their contracts, as that is how contractors make their money back.

Mark Davis, 402 S. Tyler, asked Council to consider what would happen to Young's if the city went to a single hauler, and if they would be able to sustain business so that people who are remodeling or cleaning out their garage, without having to travel significantly farther to get rid of the items. He also asked how the trash bill would be billed out, noting that if it is put on the water bill or something else, it doesn't mean it would get paid or that residents would put their trash out. He also commented on the contracts, stating that in his reading, all trash had to be taken out to the curb, which isn't always the easiest for some residents. He noted that local haulers will help residents out with those needs.

Jeff Kreischer, 9888 Dull Robinson Rd., asked several questions of city administration and Council during his time. He asked Council/administration about the actual number of trash haulers, and if anyone had been fined for not having stickers. He then asked Davis (4th Ward) who he expects to pay for the removal of large items, or the hauling away of bulk items. He stated that it costs haulers to take it away, and so the cost has to be applied for that service. He noted that even if a single hauler system came in, there would be a cost, but it would just be spread out to all residents. Mr. Kreischer then asked Council if anyone knew the average cost per household for trash pickup, and offered that no blanket statements can then be made regarding a single hauler system as "cheaper". He explained that it may be cheaper for some, but it would also be more expensive for others. Mr. Kreischer then directed his attention to Davis (4th Ward) again, and reminded him that at the bottom of every bill, is a note that says to call him if any large items need hauled away. Later, Mr. Kreischer also asked if the city would assume the billing process for a single hauler, which could cause additional fees, as well as headaches for the city.

Larry Mengerink, 812 Elston Ave., stated that he has read through posts on several Facebook groups, and he's conversed with many residents across the city. He hasn't talked to one person who is in favor of a single hauler. He suggested that the city speak with all the haulers, and arrange a rotating schedule for large item pickup. Mr. Mengerink stated that he supported local businesses, and he supported the local haulers.

Kyle Goodwin, 918 McKinley St., an employee of Young's, noted that there are many older residents that only have small trash items, or only have trash pickup a couple times a month, and their costs are much lower than average. He also explained that if a single hauler was brought in from out of town, then Young's probably wouldn't be able to continue operating so that other local villages or cities could bring their trash to Young's to dump. It would cause Van Wert residents to dump certain items at areas that are much farther away.

Matthew Perry, 245 W. 3rd St., also noted that if the local trash haulers go out of business, it would also hurt many of the surrounding smaller towns and villages.

Joe Jared, 233 Burt St., pointed out that volunteer efforts can help with this issue, and mentioned an ordinance on trailers that could be relaxed in order to help with volunteer efforts. Mr. Jared also stated that the attitude toward the local trash haulers was a result of ignorance, as he stated Council didn't know what they were already offering. Mr. Jared also stated that volunteers can also help make one person's trash another's treasure.

Kevin Allen, 245 W. 3rd St., also warned Council to consider what will happen to the city's trash if a contract is given out, noting that the local haulers will not pick up between the signing of a contract and the start of that single hauler.

Cathy Hoover, 641 Jennings Rd., stated that she was against a single hauler system, and supported the local haulers in their way to make money and do business. She noted that many people can put items out for others to take for free, or they can make arrangements with the local haulers to have it picked up. She also backed up previous statements in that the cost for some will be more - rather than cheaper - through a single hauler system.

Bonnie Thatcher, 819 State St., who stated she had been in education for over 40 years, remarked that she is resentful when laws are made regarding education without the input of teachers. She offered that a better idea would be for Council and the local trash haulers to sit down and have a conversation on the matter. Mazur noted that Council is bound by law to hold a public meeting, or forum, on city matters.

Jeff Dietsch, 408 Burt St., commented that he lives in a Habitat for Humanity house. He relayed that his concern is how a single hauler system would affect the way that trash is picked up at Habitat homes.

Mazur again remarked that the meeting was meant for discussion and gathering information, so that Council can digest the views of their fellow Council members and the public. He also stated once again that no decisions were meant to be made during this meeting.

Mr. Mengerink followed up his earlier statement by saying that he lived in the country before moving into the city, and had a \$25 per month charge for trash then. Since moving into Van Wert, he only pays \$6 per month, and so a monthly charge of \$12-\$15 per month on a single hauler contract would be much higher for him.

Mr. Davis asked Davis (4th Ward) what the communication would be like with a single hauler, as he had dealt with those situations before, and most of Van Wert had not. He pointed to Red River in Fort Wayne as an example of a "lousy operation". He also wondered what process would be needed to get rid of items outside of the normal trash pickup, when needed.

Markward explained that the city did have a hauler until the 1970s, and he wondered whether the city's setup now was due to having a single hauler system in the past. Markward acknowledged he didn't know why the city stopped using a single hauler system, and that it also might have been a city-run company at that time. Mr. Kreischer followed up with a comment that he started hauling in 1984, and he was told the city stopped because they had issues with missed pickups and couldn't keep up with the demand.

A comment was made regarding items that couldn't be put in the trash from one of the example contracts, but it was confirmed that was a non-recycle list, and not a non-trash list.

Mr. Allen stated that he has friends in Delphos, and their cans have room for three trash bags. If residents have more bags, they can put it out, but they will get an additional bill.

Mr. Jared remarked that, from a commercial standpoint, his rates may go up if a single hauler system is brought in. He noted that he spent more money in Bellefontaine than in Van Wert, and he believes that was due to free market competition.

Mr. Haas commented on a remark Davis (4th Ward) made earlier in the meeting, regarding Van Wert standing out as an outlier in their trash process. Mr. Haas explained that his father operated a waste business that spanned three counties in two states (Ohio and Pennsylvania), and that no city in that area had a single hauler. He stated that is not the norm nationally, which is the reason for so many waste companies across the country.

Mr. Goodwin explained that Young's picked up trash in Middle Point, Wetzel, Convoy, Ohio City, and wondered how those smaller communities would have service if a place like Young's could no longer operate.

Mr. Davis asked where this entire topic originated, and if trash needs in the city aren't being met. Mazur stated that he didn't have a specific answer, and some residents in the city aren't putting their trash out, and those needs aren't being met. Mr. Davis argued that a single hauler system wouldn't change that situation. Bowers reiterated that the cities she spoke with still had that issue. Mr. Goodwin described a house directly across the street from Young's, which the city had to clean up, because the resident(s) refused to put their trash out or take their trash across the street.

Mazur asked the haulers present if they would pick up a couch for example, that was sitting out on public property. Mr. Kreischer stated that if someone contacted him on the issue, he would, but he could also run the risk of picking up something that belonged to someone. This could cause additional problems.

Mazur recommended that the city haulers get together, and make recommendations for how the city and the haulers could work together. He stated that this problem could be taken care of with that cooperation.

Kim Fleming relayed that Rich Riley of Young's had been in the hospital, and that was why he wasn't present for the meeting.

Mazur asked Mr. Kreischer to speak with the other trash haulers and come up with ideas on how to alleviate the bulk trash issues in the city.


Davis (4th Ward) stated he would like to see Council meet with the local haulers, and come to a solution. He stated that if a solution can be met with the local haulers, he would consider that progress. He explained the meeting process again, noting that Council was bound by the Ohio Revised Code and Sunshine Laws, so meetings would continue to be public.

Mr. Perry asked why a solution was needed if the problem was large item pickup, and the local haulers have already said they can take care of those items if contacted. In his opinion, it sounded like that solved any problem. Mazur stated that dialogue was needed between Council and the haulers, so that things can become better than they are currently. Mazur asked Mr. Kreischer to organize with the other haulers, and thanked them for agreeing to continue the discussion. It was noted that part of that discussion would be the cost associated, and the parties responsible for that cost.

The Council of the Whole meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.



Clerk of Council
Andrew Bittner



Council President
Gerald T. Mazur

08/08/2022

Date